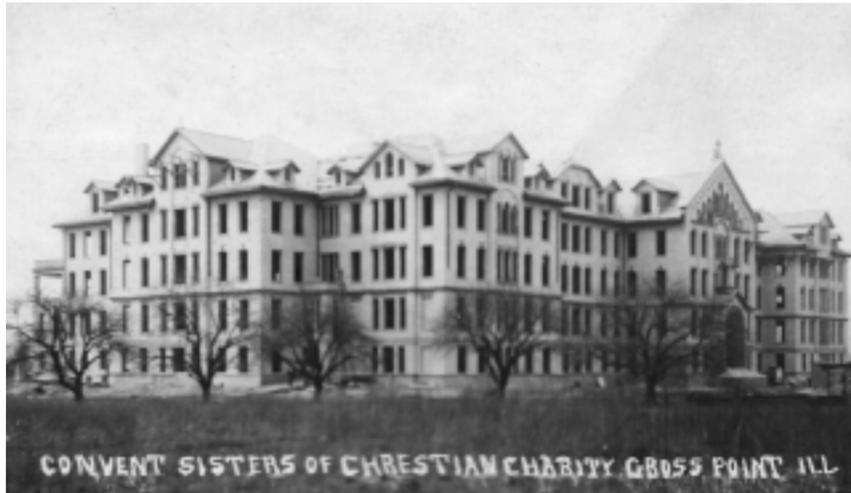


We are pleased to welcome a guest essay by local author and researcher Mark Dunn, who has been looking into the early history of Mallinckrodt and St. Joseph Church.

From 1844 until 1892, members of the Lauermaun family owned the land that is now Mallinckrodt in the Park. For twenty-years after 1892, that land was owned by the School Sisters of St. Francis – the same Catholic sisters who taught at St. Joseph School. Why did they own the land? Here is the rest of the story.

The Franciscans began teaching at St. Joseph School in Wilmette in 1877. Mother Alexia, their Mother Superior, suffered from severe rheumatism, and traveled to Bavaria to take the new “cold water” treatment popularized by a Bavarian priest, Father Sebastian Kneipp. Impressed with the results, she became determined that the Franciscans should build a Kneipp water sanitarium in America.



The Mallinckrodt mother house under construction, 1914

Encouraged by Father William Netstraeter, the long-time pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Mother Alexia planned to build her sanitarium in Gross Point on the west side of Ridge Road, Wilmette’s western boundary. On October 31, 1892, the Franciscans purchased three ten-acre lots from the Lauermaun family for \$20,000, and adjoining land from Father Netstraeter himself.

In mid-December, 1892, Father Netstraeter appeared before Wilmette’s Village Board to ask for permission to extend Wilmette’s new sewer system across Ridge Road to this newly purchased property. As a two-time President of that board, he probably expected favorable treatment. Instead, all hell broke

loose, and by the time the Board met on January 5, 1893, ninety-five citizens had filed a petition in opposition to the proposed sewer connection. The ire of the citizens of Wilmette had undoubtedly been fueled by events two years earlier, when the Cook County Board had secretly acquired an option to purchase land on the shore of Lake Michigan to build an insane asylum. That move had resulted in a stinging resolution prepared by Wilmette citizens opposing the location of *any* asylum on the North Shore.

Now, just as Wilmette had finished adding its new sewer and water system, along came Father Netstraeter to ask to use these brand-new facilities for an asylum! He had clearly misjudged the political situation, and permission was firmly denied. No water meant no water cure, which meant no sanitarium could be built in Gross Point.

Blocked in Wilmette, the Franciscans wound up building their sanitarium in Milwaukee. People came from all around the world to take the cure and enjoy the billiard room, bowling alley, gymnasium, tennis courts, sunroom, and swimming pool. Meanwhile, their property in Gross Point sat vacant for the next twenty years.

In 1912 the Franciscans sold their land in Gross Point to the Sisters of Christian Charity. Between 1913 and 1915 a new motherhouse was completed that also housed both a school and a college for many years and now stands as the Mallinckrodt in the Park condominiums. The place now enjoys plenty of water.

Mark Dunn